DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 146 500 CG 011 931

AUTHOR Whipple, W. Scott
TITLE Changing Attitudes Through Behavior Modification.
PUB DATE Jan 77
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (New Orleans, Louisiana, January, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Alternative Schools; *Behavior Change; Behavior Problems; *Changing Attitudes; *Educational Environment; Failure Factors; Models; Motivation; Program Descriptions; Program Evaluation; *School Attitudes; Secondary Education; Secondary School Students; *Student Behavior; Success Factors

ABSTRACT

This article describes the philosophy and methods used by the staff at the Granite Alternative School in changing student attitudes through behavior modification. The students involved all have a failure syndrome or low self-image, and are dropouts from traditional high schools. Among the techniques used are: (1) reinforcing good behavior (praise and approval); (2) caring for the student; (3) modeling by teachers serving as good examples; (4) token reinforcement (special grading system, letters of praise); and (5) creating a climate where success is attainable by all students. (Author/PFS)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED146500

"Changing Attitudes Through Behavior Modification"

Address given at NASSP National
Convention - January, 1977 in
New Orleans, Lousiana by
W. Scott Whipple, Principal of
Granite Alternative School,
1690 West 4800 South, Salt Lake City,
Utah - 84107, of the Granite School
District, Salt Lake City, Utah

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

W. Scott Whipple

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM"

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

CG011931

"Changing Attitudes Through Behavior Modification"

The great philosopher, William James, once stated, "The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind."

I believe that!!! I believe that our charge in Education TODAY is to do just that, to change attitudes. To make bad students good students and good students better students! To help students who dislike English to receive satisfaction and pleasure from learning how to read and the student who hates school to enjoy it and regularly attend.

I received my Master's degree several years ago in Special Education in the area of Behavioral Disorders. A great deal of my school experience dealt with behavior modification. I learned the many theories and personally used them as a classroom teacher. My remarks today will not be aimed at expounding upon any particular modification theory, but to explain the successes we are having in changing behavior at our school.

I have been principal for the past three years at the Granite Alternative School and the reason I want to refer to our school is because of the results we are having in changing student behavior. You should know that we have students who some call "drop outs" who are referred to our high school because they cannot succeed in the traditional setting. They are referred for various reasons, such as non-attendance, incorrigibles (behavior problem), phobic, under-achievers, non-motivated, drug abuse, rebellion against authority and traditional educational systems, etc.

In a recent study we found that over 20% of the sophomore students in our district never graduated from high school, and we are considered one

of the finest school districts in the Intermountain West. Other districts across the country show from 40-60% of their sophomores who never see the graduation diploma. That's a frightening figure and so our alternative program was established to help prevent the loss of students to the school system; to prevent "drop outs". Our figures at Granite Alternative School currently show about 85% of our students are attending regularly and working toward a high school diploma.

At the outset let me say that I believe our discussion topic, "Changing Attitudes Through Behavior Modification" is a two-way street. Not only can we change attitudes through behavior modification, but we can also modify behavior by changing attitudes. This is equally important. Let me address the latter of these two beliefs for just a moment. The law makes a student go to school. Yet, unless the school offers something that the student wants or needs, there is little motivation on his part for either learning or self-discipline. Whatever causes a student to feel accepted or happy with himself provides the necessary motivation, and it is usually based on positive involvement with other persons in the school. In other words, if we can change the school image, its inner workings, faculty thinking, curriculum, etc., to an image of "caring about each individual student", we will succeed as we have never succeeded before.

Someone said, "Consider the student as a person and not as a producer." We can set up school programs that will change a student's attitude his first day at school. He'll feel a difference and he'll want to attend. I heard several of our students say, "I can't wait for the weekend to be over so I can come to school" or "I wish the summer vacation would soon end so I could be back at the Alternative School." That kind of reputation spreads.

We have kids love school who have hated school for the previous eleven years.

As their attitudes change we will also see a change in behavior. Someone also said, "A change in your attitude will bring a change in your altitude." In other words, as we improve a student's attitude about school we will increase his performance, improve his behavior in school and in his entire life. We have parents tell us regularly, "We don't know what you are doing at your alternative school that is different than the regular program, but we like it. Our son is happy at home. He likes himself, he has some direction in his life. He has set some goals and is going somewhere. We can't thank you enough."

I hope you see what I'm getting at, that attitude change will almost always bring behavior changes, and the reverse of that is not as true, that behavior change will always change attitudes. I hope that we don't forget to attack the problem of attitude directly by changing some of our traditional approaches to high school education. Dr. Wm. Glasser said that "schools are second only to prisons in the numbers of things they force a person to do." No wonder so many of our students are not graduating! Maybe we need to listen to what they (the students) are trying to say. Maybe we need to make some changes???!

May I now turn my focus to how we change attitudes through behavior modification. The Luteran Digest made this statement about behavior. "Behavior is a mirror in which everyone shows his image." 100% of the students at the Granite Alternative School are referred to us because of poor behavior, even deplorable behavior. Why? Because they have a poor or terribly low self-image. They believe they are failures, worthless,

and so the behavior follows the belief they have of themselves. These are the kids who have a negative attitude about themselves and the world about them. I believe the Bible sums up the matter, "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

What do we do at the Granite Alternative School to modify behavior? It may sound so trivial that you'll overlook the real worth of the simple truth. "As a person's self-image improves, his behavior improves." (Bruno Bettleheim, speech given at Brigham Young University 1974.) In the article "Little Brother is Changing You," Rosenburg and Graubard make this statement, "Behaviorists believe that people are always conditioning each other, and that often, in their ignorance, they strengthen behaviors that no one wants. Proponents believe that to make really constructive changes in behavior, people should be conscious of what they are doing."

How do we help them improve behavior?

1. Reinforce The Good Behavior (Praise and Approval)

In his book Life Is Tremendous, Charles Jones stated this about his first law of leadership, "You must learn to say something positive, to everybody, all the time!"

Use sincere praise daily for each student. Even if he has only one trait such as a smile - tell him what a nice smile he has, or just smile back. Stress the positive strengths about a student and forget the negative things about him. We must accept students (totally) as they are, regardless of their level or station in life, an unqualified acceptance or love, not one based on certain conditions. Example: If you do this for me, John, I'll really treat you as my friend.

2. Caring - Let each student know and feel that I care about him "I feel the capacity to care...is the thing which gives life its deepest significance." Pablo Cassals

I read a true story many years ago in the Reader's Digest that left a deep impression upon me. It was about a woman teacher who taught in the slums of Chicago. She worked with a group of hard core "drop outs." Someone had predicted that over 90% of those boys would end up in the penitentiary some time in their lives, so a follow-up study was made some ten years later, and not one of those boys had been in prison. The interviewer asked these men what had motivated them. Almost without exception, they referred to their former teacher. They spoke of her with great love and admiration. They then interviewed the teacher and asked her what she had done to "touch" the lives of these boys. She said she had no magic answer. "I just loved them." In other words, she just cared about each boy and she had kept in touch and continued to care over the years.

The dictionary defines the word care as: cause or object of concern; worry; anxiety; distress; serious attention; protection; charge or temporary keeping; sorrow; to watch over; responsible for; attend to; to have an inclination, liking, fondness or affection.

A little praise and sincere concern will go a long ways in changing behavior. I have been unable to locate this article, but would like to refer you to one that will equally impress you, entitled, "To Teach Is To Love" Reader's Digest - November 1955.

3. Modeling (Teachers) "The highest form of influence is to be a model, not a critic, a light, not a Judge." Steve Covey - from his book "Spiritual Roots of Human Relations."

Correct and positive behavior is always modeled by the great teacher. Kids want to be like their favorite teacher. They idolize them and strive to be like them.

One of the greatest responsibilities of a good administrator is selecting a good staff, teachers who really care about kids and who set good examples for students to follow. Someone once said, "Any teaching should lead to worthwhile behavior change."

Students

We have developed a leadership class at our school which myself and the counselors teach. We train students to be peer counselors (models). They help other students in our school who have a poor self image and who are new to the school. This is the first year for this program but we are already thrilled with the fruits of the class as we see students helping other students improve their self image.

4. Token Reinforcement

We use many types of these at our school. For example:

(a) We have found our grading system to be a very positive reinforcer. Report card day around our school is a happy, positive experience. The reason for this is that our programs are individualized and students do not compete against other students for grades. They are graded for their own ability and achievement and therefore more students do better at report card time. We give only A, B, and C letter grades. If a student fails, we do not show an F. We just leave the space blank and he receives no credit for the course

(b) We send many letters to the homes of students telling parents of their good work.

(c) We often provide lunch or breakfast for the entire student-body at no cost, to show students we appreciate them and we care. Sometimes the meal will follow a campus clean up activity.

(d) When students assist me or one of the staff (secretary or custodian) we buy them a can of pop or a free lunch, etc., to express our thanks for their help.

(e) We express appreciation to our students through articles in our school newspaper and local newspapers, radio, and the T.V. media.

(f) Be creative. Use anything that will reinforce good behavior.

5. Success Leads To Success

Create a climate by which success is attainable by all students. A successful experience will change a student's behavior and his attitude. Recently we had a boy learn to read at our school. He had been in fights and was doing poorly, and when I talked to him, he felt himself to be a failure. He said, "There is no use trying any more," and then he said, "I can't even read, and that bothers me." I told him that our teachers really cared about him and would like to help him if he would put forth some effort, and then I told him I knew he was a good young man and very capable of reading. He went to one of our fine English teachers and she started him on a successful reading program. He now takes four cassettes home on the weekend because he has tasted of success.

May I close by saying that I know we as administrators must first initiate the changes in our schools. We must treat others as we would like them to become and they'll live up to our expectations.

Marc Roberts, in his book, "Loneliness In The Schools" - 1975, said "The principal has profound effect on the human environment of the school." May we have a positive effect that will help create a school atmosphere where students love to take part.

I met a stranger in the night
Whose lamp had ceased to shine.
I paused to let him light
His lamp from mine.
A tempest sprang up later on
And shook the world about,
And when the wind was gone
My lamp was out.
But back to me the stranger came---
His lamp was glowing fine.
He held the precious flame
And lighted mine!

Lon Woodrum